WHAT IT'S COMING TO.

Bill Nye Gives Directions About Sending Regrets.

FOUND myself in receipt of the following letter not long ago:

NEW YORK, Dec. 29, 1887.

Bill Nye, Esq.:

DEAR SIR—The club formed for the purpose of giving a Christmas tree to its fellow boarders in a large private boarding house request the pleasure of your presence at the same on Dec. 31. We do not expect you to be present; in fact, we would rather have a letter of regret from you. If you would so favor us it would not be published, but simply be read on the evening with other communications of a like nature, etc., etc.

As there is no stamp inclosed in reply to the above letter, I have decided to reply briefly through the columns of the press.

The idea of soliciting a letter of regret is original with the writer of the above, whose name is kindly suppressed. This reply will come a little late for the 1887 Christmas, but it may be retained for that of 1888.

As one who has gladdened many a social gathering by a well worded letter of regret, I desire to state that I hail with joy this new and ingenuous method of saying distinctly in a letter of invitation whether one's regrets would be preferable to his company. This custom will finally revolutionize society, and letters of invitation will some day state distinctly whether the guest will afford the greatest delight to his host by accepting or declining the invitation. It will be a big thing. Eminent men, like Dr. Mary Walker and the writer of these lines, will then have more regrets than they know what to do with.

It will also simplify the matter of entertainment itself and render it purely a clerical matter. With a good typewriter a man of moderate means could issue invitations enough in one forenoon to yield a column and a half of regrets.

He could then, on the evening of the banquet, congregate himself around a light collation of mush and milk, write up an account of the debauch and send it in to the morning papers, accompanied by the letters of regret, and it would read well and cost very little. Invitations might read as follows:

Mr. —— requests the pleasure of a letter from you declining and regretting your inability to be present at his Christmas tree. The letter should not contain over 500 words and must be written only on one side of the paper

R. S. V. P. E. O. D. T. F.

Replies should be in the handwriting of the person invited, and should not only contain a large blue mass of regrets, but branch off in a way that would really jerk out the stinger which a letter of regrets generally contains. For instance, a letter from the president should contain, beside the pang expressed in his regret, a fragment of his message and a lock of his hair. A letter of regret from Mr. Whittier should contain an autograph poem. Ditto all poets. Statesmen declining one of these conditional invitations would be expected to embody portions of forthcoming speeches in their letters of regret. Artists would be expected to jerk a pen and ink sunset in the corner of their reply, suitable for an album, and musicians could insert a bar of a favorite opera.

This method of swapping stationery for autograph regrets would soon, if properly handled, yield more than a silver wedding and be infinitely more versatile. It prevents the wholesale tramping of cake into the carpet, because you need not have cake and you need not have any one to tramp it into the carpet. No cards, no cake, no carpet, no company.

The time is approaching when a man with a lock box at the postoffice, sixty cents' worth of stationery and the utmost confidence in himself can produce for publication an account of the orgies at his house, which would make the reading public extremely angry because it was not present.

All of the foregoing, except the letter of invitation, is written in a tone of banter and raillery. The letter is genuine, and was written by a young man of this city. If he had said that my letter declining his invitation would be published, very likely I would have replied by mail, but he has maddened me by asking for a confidential autograph letter of regrets which would not get into print. Another form of invitation may read as follows:

Compliments of Mr. and Mrs. Borntoblush Unseen, who would be tickled almost to death on receiving word that Mr. William Contignously cannot be present at their Christmas tree. The tree is given largely for the purpose of making the people who live opposite hate themselves to death, and letters of bitter regret and disappointment are expected from many noted people. Please send in "copy" by 9 o'clock. The transom over the door will be left open as late as 10:30 for the reception of Christmas gifts.

Letters of regret may be couched in choice language, expressing poignant grief in the first line or two and then branch out in the direction of grief, pathos, humor, patriotism, poetry, politics or trade. The following is the style which would be in best taste for a poet:

MY DEAR MR. AND MRS. THRIFTY—As I write these words tears well up to my surcharged orbs, and if Bunny were here I would like to lean my head in her lap and have a good cry. I cannot attend your beautiful Christmas tree, as I shall have to remain at home up to a late hour writing letters of regret to people who will be bitterly disappointed unless they receive them.

Hoping that you will have a good time and see that this letter of regret goes into the paper straight, I remain, yours truly, etc.

This custom will make every host his own historian, reporter and social biographer, and with a purple imagination, a fountain pen and a messenger boy, a man may entertain like a prince.

But a sad thought comes to me as I close this column of bright anticipations. Perhaps an exception has been made in my own case. It may be that the custom is not to become general, but that in my case the host has seen me at some other gathering and decided that I would do better and shine with more effulgence as a regretter than as a guest, and so, with that prompt and ready discernment which should characterize the true host, he has assigned to me that part on the programme which he thought nature had best fitted me for!

And so, while fair women and brave men beneath the ruddy light sway to and fro to the voluptuous measures of a Strauss waltz, or happy voices burst forth in song and eyes tell of love to other eyes which in return make a similar remark, I shall be permitted to fill the air and the postoffice with my vain regrets! Hah! Oh harrowing thought! It cannot, must not be! Once more I make the same statement, viz., "Hah!"—Bill Nye in New York World.

Likely.

The infant king of Spain has received a present of 10,000 cigars from a tobacco planter of Havana. As the cigars presented to a person are about 75 per cent. meaner than those he buys for his own use, it is probable that the royal babe will continue to smoke cigars of his own purchasing and give away to his friends those presented to him.—Norristown Herald.

QUIET CHUCKLES.

"Did you ever go tobogganing, Mr. Winterwheat?" "No," said the old man, "but I once stepped into the elevator well and fell down four stories in three-tenths of a second. That is fast enough for me. I'm getting too old for much excitement."—Burdette.

A New York heiress had a marriage proposal from an English duke, but her parents were proud and ambitious and made her marry an American editor.—Norristown Herald.

They say up around St. Paul that it is so cold that the air fairly glistens with the bits of frost that fill it. We noticed those bright specks, but we thought that they were frozen portions of the speeches made by Governor McGill and Mayor Smith at the time of the laying of the corner stone of the ice palace.—Chicago Times.

An ice bridge has formed at Niagara Falls, and American defaulters who want to reach Canada can now slide.—Norristown Herald.

The Transcript speaks of the turtle as taking a "leading part at dinners." We thought he generally appeared as a supe.—Boston Bulletin.

An effort is being made in New York to abolish hanging, and substitute killing by electricity. There is one thing to be said in favor of the change. The abolition of the gibbet would retire the moss covered phrases "dull thud" and "launched into eternity."—Norristown Herald.

A Hardened Specimen.

Omaha Man—I sent you a communication yesterday stating that I had sent a ham to the starving family referred to in your columns.

Editor—Yes. I ordered it printed.

"It came out in the paper that I had 'stolen a ham from that starving family and was sorry for it.'"

"My gracious! It was a typographical error, of course. I sincerely hope you will believe me. Don't shoot."

"I was only reaching for my pocket handkerchief, sir, to wipe the tears of sympathy from my eyes. I know how you feel about it. I did not mind it. I only called to direct your attention to the blunder so it would be corrected."

"You did not mind such a horrible error as that?"

"Oh, no. I'm used to such things. I used to be an editor myself."—Omaha World.

The Wrong Door.

Agent (to lady at front door)—Is the mistress of the house in?

Lady—I think so, sir. Will you be kind enough to inquire at the kitchen door?—New York Sun.

Society in Philadelphia.

A member of The Philadelphia Call staff received an invitation to call upon a friend the other evening, and was considerably mystified when he saw in the lower left hand corner the following letters in bold faced type, "C. O. B. K." His friends were questioned as to their meaning, but none of them had ever seen them used that way, and he was compelled to wait until the party who sent it should clear away the mystery. "What do those letters mean?" he was asked. "Come or be killed," said he.—Philadelphia Call.

A Nice Little Christian.

Fashionable Rector (to little girl)—So you love to go to church, Flossie, and be a good little girl?

Flossie—Yes, indeed, Mr. Whitechoker.

Rector—Do you know many of the little girls who belong to the church?

Flossie—No, sir; not very many. I only care to know those who sit in the middle aisle.—New York Sun.

Cheaper.

"Let me give you some advice," said Mr. Clarence Knowles, "about sodding grass for your lawn. Don't sod it. Don't use grass at all. Buy Persian rugs and cover your lawns with them. You can get them for a hundred dollars apiece, and a hundred or so will cover your lawn. They are quite as pretty as grass and very much less expensive."—Atlanta Constitution.

Suicidal.

Mrs. Langerfelt—I took your prescription, doctor, but it hasn't seemed to do me a bit of good.

Dr. Boles—Did you disguise it in a bit of orange, as I told you?

Mrs. L.—No; you see it was late last night, and instead of sending out for an orange, I used a slice of fruit cake.—Tid Bits.

Wanted Work—For His Wife.

Applicant—Please, ma'am, can you help a poor man who is out of work?

Woman—I guess I can find something for you to do.

Applicant (gratefully)—Thanks. If you could give me some washing to do I'll take it home to my wife.—The Epoch.

Truth in a Nutshell.

One of Illinois' many editors has a great head. He is a philosopher, for he writes: "Never judge by appearances. A shabby coat may contain an editor, while a man wearing a high toned plug hat and sporting a dude cane may be a delinquent subscriber."—New York Sun.

Of Course It Was Black.

Editor—How's this, young man? You speak of the fair bride as having hair black as the driven snow. Where were you raised?

Reporter—In Pittsburg, sir.

Editor—Ah, yes.—Detroit Free Press.

An Economist.

Hopkins—Why do you wear rubbers, Jopkins?

Jopkins—Economy, my dear boy. There are no soles to my shoes.—New York Sun.

The Iron Hand.

The fact that the king of Sweden has issued a volume of his poems shows very clearly that the Swedes are a patient and long suffering people.—New Orleans States.

THE YOUNG FOLKS.

Grandmas Usually Sympathize with Children in Trouble.

A little boy was sent to the grocer's for a pail of molasses. Returning he fell and spilled it in the sand. As he wept profusely over the appalling catastrophe, a little friend chanced to come along and asked him what he was crying for. He replied: "I have spilt the 'lasses, and I am afraid to go home and tell my mamma. She will whip me." To which his little would be comforter answered, in solemn tones, "Haven't you got a grandma?"—Boston Globe.

A Theological Infant.

Grace M. is 8 years old. When 5 years old she was in the country visiting her grandparents. There she had as a playmate Georgie, the son of a Methodist clergyman, of like tender years. While at play they were frequently annoyed by a little urchin whose society was neither congenial nor desirable. On one occasion Gracie became sorely disgusted with the little intruder, and, throwing up her hands, exclaimed:

"Well, there, I do wish Pat Fallon was in the bad place."

"Oh, no," remonstrated the precocious son of the parson, "you wish the Lord would take him."—Boston Globe.

Didn't Want to Hear.

Little Walter is a very active boy, and takes no account of his steps when playing and amusing himself, but a call in the midst of fun to do some trifling errand for any member of the family produces an immediate change of pace as well as face. One morning his mother, having twice sent him downstairs with messages to the servants, made a third demand for his services a few moments later, which so annoyed him that he angrily exclaimed: "I wish I had doors on my ears, so I couldn't hear you."—Harper's Magazine.

Offering a Substitute.

One day Ernest had been seriously lectured by his mother, and finally sent to the yard to find a switch with which he was to be punished. He returned soon, and said: "I couldn't find any switch, mamma; but here's a stone you can throw at me."—Harper's Magazine.

Itch and Scratch.

Little Bessie—Papa, I do hate to hear your pen scratch.

Papa—It's the paper, my dear.

Bessie—Well, papa, can't you get some paper that doesn't itch so bad.—Burlington Free Press.

Tale of the Blizzard.

"Ever since the blizzard ceased," says a Minnesota paper, "work has been going forward on excavations for the purpose of discovering the postoffice building. A shaft is being sunk through the snow which it is hoped will strike it, but if it should not those in charge will drift north and south till it is located. Grave fears are entertained that the postmaster may have become despondent, as he has not been heard to holler since early in the storm. He must certainly be quite lonesome, at least, as his only companion was the office cat and he very likely has been forced to use her for fuel before this time, as the lock boxes and registered letters must be exhausted ere now. Parties who live out on Eden prairie report that they had no difficulty in finding their way home during the storm as they kept hold of the telegraph wire. Were it not for the extreme dryness of our Minnesota air the friends of the postmaster would be very uneasy lest when he is recovered he should be found frozen as stiff as a railroad tie."—Chicago Tribune.

Watched Over with Care.

Mamma (to nurse)—What is all that noise in the nursery, Marie?

Nurse—Ze leetle dog, madame, has taken Mees Flossie's candy.

Mamma—Well, take it from him at once, Marie, and give it back to Miss Flossie. Poor little Fido, he mustn't eat so much candy; it might make him sick.—The Epoch.

Everything Went.

"Did you make enough money on your stock deal, John, to buy the sort of carriage you promised? I suppose you did, though," she added confidently; "you said you put in your money at the bottom of the market."

"So I did, my dear, so I did; but the bottom itself dropped out."—Chicago Mail.

Safe Traveling Assured.

Eastern Railway Manager—What's the price of coal now?

Assistant—Nine dollars a ton.

"Humph! Send word to the passenger brakemen to use coal very cautiously. We don't want any more car stove horrors."—Omaha World.

How It Happened at Last.

"Have you heard that Lily is engaged to young Fledgely?" asked Maud.

"No," replied Ella. "I thought he was too bashful ever to propose."

"Oh, but it's leap year, you know."—New York Evening Sun.

Reason in All Things.

Gentleman (to Uncle Rastus)—Why, Uncle Rastus, you never charged me thirty-five cents before for carrying in a ton of coal.

Uncle Rastus—Dat's case de price hab riz, Mistah Smif. Yo' kain't expec' to git seven dollah coal carried in at de ole rates, sah.—The Epoch.

An Absorbing Remedy.

Nurse—Doctor! doctor! By mistake I gave the patient No. 17 a spoonful of ink instead of medicine.

Doctor—Well, make him eat a blotter right away.—The Waterbury.

Very Fortunate.

"Yes," said a young Philadelphian; "we have a fine little theatre in our city solely for the use of amateurs."

"That's fortunate for the public," observed his friend.—Judge.

Seasonable.

On freezing days protect your chest,
Close up your coat, pull down your vest,
And yank your cap down strong.
These frosty morns, when blizzards blow,
Man wants but little ear below,
Nor wants that little long.

—New York Evening Sun.